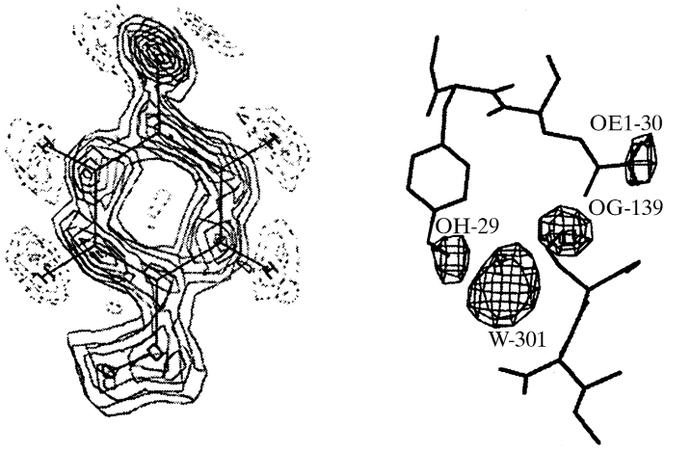

Fig. 19.1.3.1. Information content in neutron density maps. (*a*) A well ordered tyrosine ring in the 1.4 Å refined structure of crambin (Teeter & Kossiakoff, 1984). (*b*) $D_2O - H_2O$ difference density map of a hydrogen-bonding network in trypsin: Gln30 Oε1–Ser139 D_γ, Ser139 O_γ–W301, W301–Tyr29 DO. Water density and H/D exchange density shown.

illusion that the peak has been translated. The hydroxyl deuterium orientation is readily determined by its position in positive density.

Use of $D_2O - H_2O$ neutron difference maps provides a high level of stereochemical information (see below) (Kossiakoff *et al.*, 1992; Shpungin & Kossiakoff, 1986). Fig. 19.1.3.1(*b*) displays a network of three hydrogen bonds involving three side-chain types and an occluded water. With knowledge of the heavy atoms alone, it is not possible to define the donor/acceptor character of any of the side chains, because they can act in either capacity, as can the water. The assignments can be made unambiguously from the $D_2O - H_2O$ density, as can the orientation of the water molecule. These maps have allowed detailed analysis of hydroxyl orientations in protein molecules (Kossiakoff *et al.*, 1990, McDowell & Kossiakoff, 1995).

Neutron diffraction is an ideal method for investigating methyl-group conformation, because it allows direct observation of hydrogen-atom positions (Fig. 19.1.3.2) (Kossiakoff & Shteyn, 1984). Although methyl groups in proteins are not held in fixed positions, but spin rapidly around their rotor axes, the time-averaged character of the diffraction experiment establishes the low-energy conformer and the degree of disorder. Accurate methyl-group analysis requires relatively higher resolution (1.5 Å or better) than characterizing other structural features.

19.1.4. Phasing models and evaluation of correctness

Neutron diffraction does not lend itself to the multiple isomorphous phasing approach. This is because the range in atomic scattering power is much narrower than for the X-ray case. There are a few relatively rare isotopes where a significant anomalous effect exists; however, they are not adequate for getting primary phasing information (Schoenborn, 1975). In practice, the initial phasing model has to be derived from the X-ray-determined structure. This is done by applying the appropriate neutron scattering lengths to the refined X-ray coordinates (Norvell & Schoenborn, 1976). Thus, at least in the early stages of analysis, the neutron model relies heavily on the accuracy of the X-ray structure. The importance of an accurate phasing model is borne out by the fact that in several investigations the phasing models were not accurate enough to allow the structure to be refined successfully.

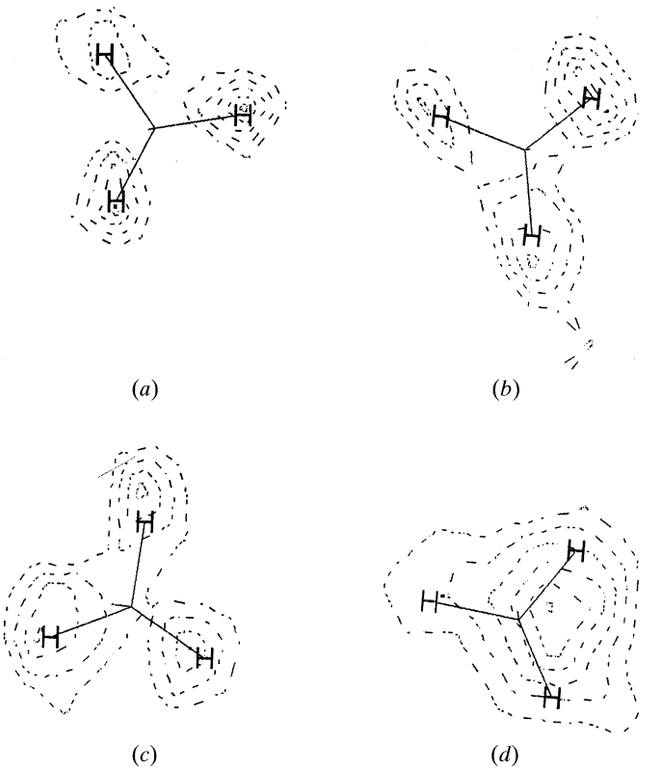

Fig. 19.1.3.2. Sections of a neutron difference Fourier map showing methyl hydrogen densities for several representative methyl groups. No phasing information about the methyl hydrogens was included in the model; therefore, hydrogens should appear in the difference map at their true positions but at reduced density (∼ half weight). The groups shown are: (*a*) Ala24, (*b*) Thr21, (*c*) Thr28, and (*d*) Ala45.

19.1.5. Evaluation of correctness

It is an important first step in the structural analysis to determine the quality of the phases derived from the X-ray structure (Kossiakoff, 1983). Several methods have been used. Using the initial phasing model, the most powerful tests examine an unbiased neutron Fourier map for the appearance of features that are independent of the model. The presence or absence of these features, especially those resulting from the scattering of hydrogen and deuterium atoms, is the most reliable measure of the phasing model. One such test is to evaluate the appearance of the water structure, *i.e.*, the water molecules hydrogen-bonded to the surface of the protein. The water molecules observed in the X-ray analysis are excluded from the neutron-phasing model. The test is applied in cases where the crystals have been soaked in D_2O. The peaks in the neutron density map that correspond to the strongly coordinated water-molecule positions owe their existence solely to the neutron data and phasing model. Even at an early stage, because of the large neutron-scattering potential of D_2O, many of these tightly bound waters found in the X-ray structures should also be observable in the neutron density map.

Another aspect to test phasing reliability is the ability to identify the orientation of side-chain amide groups of asparagine and glutamine. The difference in neutron scattering between O and the two deuteriums and the Nδ2 (5.8 f *versus* 22.6 f) is large enough to be detectable in the Fourier map when these groups are well ordered (Fig. 19.1.5.1). The use of unexchangeable hydrogens for evaluation is considerably more complicated, despite the fact that they constitute about one-half the total number of atoms in the molecule. The difficulty arises from the negative scattering character of the hydrogens, which displaces their apparent positions

references